

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Jerry Tarutani

Jerry Tarutani, son of immigrants Sutejiro and Masayo Tarutani, was born in Kalihi on January 13, 1920. His father was a blacksmith.

Tarutani started his long association with Pālama Settlement in 1932, after moving to Pālama with his mother and siblings. He swam, played ball, and made friends at the settlement. He had his dental work done at the Strong-Carter Dental Clinic.

He attended neighborhood schools before graduating from St. Louis School in 1938.

He subsequently taught judo at Pālama Settlement for thirty-five years. He also served on the settlement's board of trustees.

He and his late wife, Mary Judith Cantrell Tarutani, raised a family of five children. The Tarutanis have two grandchildren.

He is a retired auditor.

Tape No. 27-45-1-98

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Jerry Tarutani (JT)

Honolulu, O'ahu

February 12, 1998

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Jerry Tarutani for the Pālama Settlement oral history project on February 12, 1998, and we're at his home in Honolulu, O'ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, why don't we begin? Jerry, why don't you tell me first of all, where and when you were born.

JT: Oh, I was born in Kalihi.

WN: What part of Kalihi?

JT: Where the Japanese-language school is now.

WN: Oh, and what Japanese[-language] school was that? Was that Pālama?

JT: No, it was Kalihi. . . .

WN: Oh, Gakuen?

JT: Gakuen, yeah.

WN: Okay, and what is your birth date?

JT: One, thirteen, twenty [January 13, 1920].

WN: And what street did you live on?

JT: Where I was born?

WN: Yeah.

JT: (Chuckles) They had no street there, I couldn't recall.

WN: Okay, I thought you told me you lived Emmeluth, was it Emmeluth Lane?

JT: Oh, that's Pālama.

WN: Oh okay, I see.

JT: Yeah, born over there [Kalihi]. Then when I was about twelve I moved over to . . .

WN: I see, to Pālama, yeah?

JT: Yeah, it was Emmeluth, but then [the street name] changed to 'Īao, adjoining Likelike School.

WN: Tell me something about your father. What was he doing?

JT: Never know. He died. In the influenza [outbreak of 1919–20]. So actually I didn't have any father.

WN: So your mother raised all of you?

JT: Right.

WN: So what kind of---did she do work?

JT: My father used to make swords in Japan. So when he came here as a laborer, they picked him to be a blacksmith. And my mother worked in the sugar plantation, *hō hana*. Then he got promoted and Dillingham wanted him to go to the Mainland. And my mother said, "Gee, this is foreign enough. Let's not go any further." So we stayed here.

But when the big influenza came through, my aunt had it and he went over there to talk to her. Those days were horse and buggy, so he used to supply them with the hay. [One] night, he came back, he said, "Wash everything I have," you know? "I'm tired." And his fever went up and he passed away. I was just an infant. So as far as my father, I had very little knowledge of him. So my mother raised us as a single [parent], you know. And the old custom was to take the urn of my father back to Japan. So at the infant age, we all went to Japan. The whole family. Then after the burial we came back here again.

And he [JT's father] had a nursery and had some plant baskets. He designed that, he invented that. And in the old days, maidenhair and those things was very popular. My uncle was in the nursery business [also] so they worked very closely together. Eventually we got out of that, my mother can't carry on so she took house jobs, like that.

WN: Oh, domestic?

JT: Yeah, right.

WN: You said he invented baskets?

JT: Yeah. You know, there's a basket wire? They'd make a nice basket and then they'd put *hāpu'u*, a tree fern around it. And then put soil or planting material there. And he invented that, see?

WN: Right.

JT: I saw the crude thing that they used to make it round. You know, the big cylinder like that, wooden, and crank, you know? From big roll to small little one, then you spread it out and you made a basket out of that.

WN: Is that a hanging basket?

JT: Yeah, you could hang it or you can put it on a stand. I have a sample of that if you want to see. It's interesting. It's simple, but those days, it was quite a thing. And of course, he made pretty good money out of it.

WN: Did he have a name, was there a name for the business?

JT: No.

WN: And he worked out of his house or . . .

JT: At home. And that was in the Kalihi area.

WN: So what do you remember about Kalihi, growing up?

JT: Kalihi, not Pālama?

WN: Not Pālama. Because you said you came to Pālama at age twelve, yeah?

JT: Yup.

WN: So you probably have some memories, yeah? Of Kalihi?

JT: Yeah, of going to school there. We were next to the Kalihi Gakuen, you know. So I guess we participated in that. The old Japanese[-language] school used to have *shibai*. You know what *shibai* is?

WN: Yeah.

JT: And they used to put up a pretty good show. And we used to participate in them. Singing as a group or act and that's about all I can remember. But as to the school right next door, we used to study at the same time. We used to play in the schools and those days, *chanbara*, you know, playing sword and all that kind. And then of course, ended up in Likelike [School], next to Pālama Settlement. That's an English program.

WN: So you still lived in Kalihi, but going to school in Likelike? I see.

JT: Yup, yup. Then I went to Pālama Gakuen. That was behind Ka'iulani School. Then there used to be lot of gang fights and whatnot. So I joined Pālama [Settlement]. And I think my membership those days was ten cents a year or twenty-five cents a year. And that became a second home.

WN: So you were going Pālama Settlement even while living in Kalihi?

JT: No.

WN: Or did you move to Pālama first?

JT: Yeah.

WN: First of all then, tell me—you know why you folks moved to Pālama?

JT: Because as I mentioned the nursery, my mother couldn't carry on that. So, I think there were more opportunities coming towards town.

WN: So where in Pālama did you move to?

JT: Emmeluth or now, 'Īao Lane, yeah?

WN: Yeah, so tell me something about your neighborhood.

JT: I tell you, it's amazing. We had melting pot there. We had a Russian [family], the Lenchankos, you know. The young son is at Punahou. We had Peter Schubert. He was the foremost bicycle champion.

WN: Schubert.

JT: Yeah. Lenchanko. Charlie McKee played at Pālama. Who else? We had Puerto Ricans, we had Portuguese. Oh, Martin. Bill Martin. And opposite our place had Helenihi. He was a railroad man and I think accidentally he died. The daughters all became schoolteachers and whatnot. There was an Inez, Portuguese, right next door who was a security man. He was the meanest guy.

(Laughter)

JT: Mean enough, and then yet he had to have a wild dog around his yard, you know? (WN laughs.) Who else? Our neighbor was Mun Chee Chun who was a post mail carrier.

WN: How do you spell that name?

JT: Mun, M-U-N C-H-E-E, Chun.

WN: Chun.

JT: Well, Pālama had sort of a Japanese community too, by the Pālama Theater, Furuhashi Store, and all of them. And Pālama Gakuen was right below that. So, Likelike was the English[-language] school. Then Pālama Gakuen was the Japanese-language school. So I don't know whether you experienced that, but it was pretty tough, you know, going to the English-speaking school, and then when it's over, you don't have one hour, boom, you have to go over there and learn a different language completely. Today, they make it palatable. In those days, you know, it was strictly separate. And the teachers were all from Japan and Buddhist priests,

like that, you know? So they were pretty good and they want us to be standard of Japan, so they were strict. Then from there, I learn all the Japanese [martial] arts, you know, judo, kendo. We had top teachers there. And then Pālama Settlement was swimming, basketball, football, and all that, see?

WN: When did you have time to go to Pālama Settlement if you were going English school and Japanese[-language] school?

JT: You'd be surprised. (WN laughs.) It's possible, see? Weekends, of course, and like Japanese[-language] school was from about two o'clock to about four o'clock. And then kendo [started] about one hour later. And when that's through then we go home, help around the house, and then go to Pālama to swim. So Pālama was a second home. You know, if you don't see me at home, I'm over there.

So in a way, it kept us out of trouble. And our days, when you say "Pālama," they say, "Ooooh." you know. Because they [Pālama residents] were rugged people. But they didn't shoot or you know, stab each other. You could fistfight. Gang fights—Kaka'ako gang, Makiki gang, you know, they used to have all kind of fights. I was below them, you know, so let them fight.

(Laughter)

WN: By below, you mean you were younger?

JT: Yeah, I was much younger. But they used to be rugged guys. And never leave a guy drunk and be beaten up by somebody else. Take him home, make sure he's safe at home. That's the Pālama style, see? One of our rivalry was Nu'uanu YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association]. They were kind of the elite group, see. Those guys, on the surface, looked like shining armor, but they used to do a lot of things that we don't dare do, you know. And so there was much rivalry in that score. Then eventually, I joined them. You know, not because I was wealthy, but they wanted to make a strong swimming team. And they had some of the fastest guys there but they wanted somebody in-between to make a [relay] team of four. So Gilbert Ching was one of the fastest short distance. Alex Young was one of the fastest middle distance. And Jimmy Tanaka was the fastest long distance. So in-between, they wanted somebody. They couldn't find it over there, so they came to Pālama and by sort of a scholarship, you know, they come. You know [former state senator] Larry Kuriyama?

WN: Yeah.

JT: Well, he was the Nu'uanu Y guy. Mits Oka was our swimming coach. He was also wrestling coach at the University of Hawai'i. He also coached swimming at the University [of Hawai'i]. But most of my swimming ability was in Pālama. On your own, no more coach, you know? Pālama, you learn yourself and if you didn't have the will to win, you just, you know. So did pretty well, we train light in the afternoon.

WN: This is at Pālama?

JT: Yeah. And Kamehameha [Schools] didn't have any swimming pool, so they used to come to train at Pālama Settlement. And we kind of intermingled and they wanted me to go to

Kamehameha to swim. I said, "Hey, I'm not Hawaiian." And that's the only thing held it up. They was going to fake it, but I had a chance to go over there. So then played football, barefoot and all that. But not to a point that I joined a league or anything like that.

WN: So when you first went to Pālama at what, age twelve, around?

JT: Yeah, maybe a little younger, eleven, yeah.

WN: Okay, and so the main thing was swimming?

JT: No, all sports. And Bobby Rath's older brother, Junior Rath [i.e., James A. Rath, Jr.], used to be like an athletic director. And we kind of admired the guy because he never let you do things that he cannot do. And clumsy as he is, you know, he'd belly flop and everything, diving like that. But he said, "This is the way you do it." And then he stays on the sideline telling what you should do. And then there was a guy named Mendonca teaching tumbling. Tumbling and wrestling. And then, boxing too. We used to have professional fighters training in the gymnasium. They wanted me to fight, you know. Because I knock out several guys and they said, "Hey, you gonna be the next Barney Ross?"

"No, no thank you." And tennis, you probably heard of this guy [Sam] Saffery. He was playing there.

WN: Sam Saffery?

JT: Yeah. He's with the state or something, yeah?

WN: I'm not sure.

JT: He got his start at Pālama Settlement, the tennis court across the street. There's no tennis court anymore.

WN: Oh, across Vineyard [Street], there was . . .

JT: Yeah, yeah. Vineyard.

WN: There was tennis courts, yeah, that's right.

JT: And there was a sort of day-care center, like a kindergarten. With a small, shallow swimming pool. [U.S. Congresswoman] Patsy Mink had her daughter there. And she was a shy, nice mother. And later on, she became a congresswoman. And now she talks.

(Laughter)

JT: A lot of people came, you know, from that area.

WN: So before you went to Pālama, did you know how to swim?

JT: No.



WN: Oh, not at all?

JT: See, there used to be an old swimming hole in the Kapālama Canal there. And in order to swim, they throw you in there, see? And it's up to you to survive and fight your way back. And to grasp on the land or grass or whatever. That's where I learned.

(Laughter)

JT: You know, if you gutsy, they throw you in there. And then later on, when we had access to join Pālama for twenty-five cents a year or something, then we had sort of a training. We put the life vest or something and then they tell you how to kick. And again, without guts, you couldn't—never make it. Then they say, "Why don't you get in a summer swimming competition?" And Matsuguma put up a trophy. So we got into swimming meets. Freestyle, breaststroke, backstroke, all events. And pure guts, I tell you.

(Laughter)

JT: Swimming across twenty-five yards, no training, nothing. You just make the best of it, and whoever reach the other side is the winner. And there used to be a guy named Shigeru Iha. He was a favorite of Bobby Rath. So Bobby Rath folks were the judges. And I remember a couple of times, just by mere guts—Shigeru was good in the breaststroke—I'd beat him just by a head. And Bobby look at Shigeru, "What's the matter? Why didn't you beat the guy?" He didn't know me from Adams, you know? But I keep on winning. "Hey, you're all right."

(Laughter)

JT: That's how, he knows me very well that way.

WN: When you say you had to be gutsy, did you consider yourself a tough, gutsy kid?

JT: No, just the will to win, that's all.

WN: Okay.

JT: That's the kind of guts, you know.

WN: Were there meek kids that somehow made it in Pālama or do you have to be—have some kind of guts or will to win? To survive there?

JT: We were all about equal. And it's the guy that had that little extra "oomph" to win. And the same thing with boxing. "Hey, come on kid, come over here. Spar with us."

Okay, we spar, we don't know how to fight, we don't know how to pull our jabs and anything. Then you get couple of hard knocks and then you go, "You sonofagun!" And then you go all at it.

And you put the guy on his knee. "Hey! Why don't you train with us?"

Kendo, the same thing. The Japanese[-language] school side. We had teachers, *bon-san*



teachers in kendo. I myself, was from the poor side, see. And everybody used to have *hakama* and all that uniform. Yours truly had nothing but a khaki pants. But when we went to tournaments, I always bring home the bacon. And they said, "Gee, I think you need uniform. You know, you the only guy with the khaki, but you win." You see, you win for the school.

But the school didn't buy uniform for me, so I said, "Heck, if you don't want me without uniform. . . ."

"No, no, no. We want you." But all our competition, I always had to go against somebody older than me or bigger than me. Because in my category, I was out-classing them, you see.

And same with the swimming. I used to go against university guys. Masuto Fujii, all those guys, and somebody two or three years older than me. Then you had the inferiority complex, you know, as I say, you need guts to win. Without training, so is merely guts and reading books of Johnny Weismuller and like that. You see how many strokes he make and how many kicks he make, like that. Nobody telling you, "Hey, you know, you lagging in your kicks." or something like that. It's guts that going to beat the guy at the end of the pool length. So under swimming, we had this competition and that sort of put me on the map as far as the Matsuguma trophy and all that.

Pālama used to have an auditorium where they used to have movies. Free if you're a member. And that's where they used to give awards. And that's where they used to have all the ceremonies. So here, this poor kid come up and get a trophy, you know. They take picture, like that. Then instead of taking it home, they put it in a trophy room, a trophy case. I think if you go to Pālama there, I know there's two or three that belongs to me, but it's still there, see. And you don't take it home, they put it in there, that's all the championships of Pālama's basketball, baseball, and all that, all in the trophy room. Used to be right in the administration [building], front. But I don't know where it is now. They kind of move it around, you see.

So football, the same thing. But I just couldn't hack it. I got to stay home and help the family. And just don't have time, see.

WN: Did you have brothers and sisters?

JT: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Were they athletic too?

JT: Well, my older brother was a baseball catcher. And the other one was in track. But they didn't spend much time at Pālama.

WN: Why did you stay at Pālama for so long?

JT: Nowhere else to go, you know? I did break away when I went to YMCA. You know, when we trained over there. And basketball, we used to play in a league. Because then people donated uniforms. Otherwise I would be in cut-up khaki pants.

WN: So in football, who did you folks play against?

JT: Football, was barefoot football. I was too light. In barefoot football, [players were] 130 pounds, 150 pounds. I was more a spectator from the swimming pool, you go up at the top of the ladder, watch. And then when they practicing, I used to go down and catch football, kick football. My idol was this guy, [William] Flazer. He has a world record, you know, in barefoot, he kicked seventy-five yards.

I used to ride scooter a lot. You know what a scooter is?

WN: Yeah.

JT: You don't see that much nowadays.

WN: Yeah, a scooter, where you stand up.

JT: Yeah, yeah. With an apple box, you make it, you know? (WN chuckles.) Then you get the two-by-four and you put the back skate, the front skate. And you kick, see. And then you get little outgrown to that, and things break all the time. Then for Christmas, I got a regular thing. So I used to go all over with that scooter. Not bicycle, but scooter. Little did I realize, it strengthened my foot, my leg. So kicking footballs and Flazer was world recognized, you know. I used to kick sixty, seventy-footers. Barefooted.

WN: This is punting?

JT: Yeah. And when I went to high school, you know, gutsy, yeah? Varsity.

WN: This is for what school?

JT: St. Louis.

WN: St. Louis?

JT: Yeah. I said, "I'll join." And Herb Fletcher was the coach.

He said, "What's your experience?"

And I said, "Oh, I used to run around with guys, you know, 130-pound."

He said, "Yeah? Try kick this ball." I take off the shoe, you know? And he said, "No, no, no. You got to put the shoe on."

I said, "Gee, I cannot kick like that." But okay, I kick about forty [yards], like that, you know. So I said, "Let me kick barefoot."

He said, "If you feel comfortable, go ahead." So I kick 'em, it spiral about sixty [yards]. "Hey! But the league won't allow you to take the shoe off. You have to have the shoe on." He said, "Can you pass?"

I said, "Well, you tell me where and I'll pass it."

"Okay, you be quarterback." (WN chuckles.)

I was the fastest guy on the field, you know. They used to call me "Little Tommy Kaulukukui." And you know why I was the fastest guy in the field? Because I got hit couple of times by the tackle and guard, 200-pounders, smash me like that. (JT makes crunching sound.) I didn't pass out, [but] I didn't want to get hit anymore.

(Laughter)

JT: So when they make a slight opening, I was gone. They knew if they going to catch me, they got to catch me from the side. Then it came to a sad ending. I was swimming. Swimming and football don't work together. I developed a charlie horse. So I had to sit it out all the time. I had the cleanest uniform, I tell you, because I was sidelined. (Laughs)

WN: This is St. Louis?

JT: Yeah, yeah.

WN: This is when St. Louis was still at College Walk?

JT: No, no, no. It was up in the hills.

WN: Oh, was up St. Louis [Heights] by then?

JT: Yeah. Then part time, I used to work for the grocery store.

WN: Which grocery store?

JT: It's no longer there. It's in Pālama, right in there. And I learned how to cut pork chop, like that. "You want two-pound pork chop?" I used to get it right on the scale. I became so good. So they lent me the truck to deliver. And they lent me the truck to go to school. The truck is good, but didn't have brakes.

(Laughter)

JT: You know, St. Louis is up on the heights and we come down, and then got all the football players with me, at least six guys on the truck. And we know the traffic cop [is] at the end, he'd say, "Hey!"

"Okay, go ahead!" That was crazy, I tell you. Had there been traffic going the opposite direction, we would have rammed right in, we would be killed. But that's away from Pālama.

But, had I not the experience of catching, passing, kicking at Pālama, I would never make the [St. Louis School] varsity team. And that, not through coaches, but again, watching guys kick, like that, and passing, yeah? And I used to ask lot of questions, you know? I pick out a good guy, like Masuto Fujii. He used to be good in passing. I say, "How you pass?" you know? "What do you do? And how you catch?"

And he say, "Well, you run this way and then try to catch it over your head," or whatnot.

Later on, I see professionals, they catch below, so they don't get intercepted.

WN: Who were your coaches? Football?

JT: Well, at the varsity, was Herb Fletcher. But at Pālama, had Tamanaha, and all those guys. And from the top of the bleachers, we were able to watch them practice. And I always used to idolize the good players. When they have competition, I watch what the quarterback does, what the halfback does, and who does the best. And I used to kind of idolize them, follow them, see how they practice. It's just by learning that way. Not by someone coaching you, how to pass or how to receive. But merely watching. See, no brains, you just watch and you try yourself, see? (Chuckles) One thing I failed to do was placekicking, you know. If I had the skill in placekicking. . . . In punting, I'd challenge anybody, you know, barefooted though. If I had concentrated on placekicking, I could have played, you know. Those days, had senior league. And of course, I was too light. I was 128 [pounds] at the varsity and much too light, see? But I was fast. I didn't want anybody to ram me and (JT makes crunching sound). (Laughs)

WN: What about dropkicking?

JT: Yeah, that's it. Dropkicking, placekicking. You know, those days, didn't mean much. Today, it's a deciding thing, you know?

WN: Yeah.

JT: Yeah.

WN: Like no dropkicking anymore, but, yeah.

JT: Yeah, right, right, right.

WN: So like, you were, in essence, like a triple-threat quarterback, then?

JT: Yeah, that was the position.

WN: Yeah.

JT: Again, from the guts now, not . . .

(Laughter)

JT: But I got hit couple of times, boy.

WN: So what did Pālama provide you? Did they provide you with the helmets and the pads?

JT: No, no.

WN: No equipment?

JT: Those days, no, they were just introducing helmets, I think. And shoulder pads. Barefooted.

You know, still, real guts. Just like rugby. Rugby, don't even have headgear or anything like that. But strangely, when you're young, you like that contact, see? And I got my contact through judo. And one of the dentists over there [Pālama Settlement], George Yoshikawa, he was at the Strong-Carter Dental Clinic. He was an ex-judo champion. He took interest in the kids around Pālama and said, "Hey, I'll teach you judo."

WN: I see, so he was a dentist at Strong-Carter.

JT: Yeah.

WN: And then he started teaching.

JT: Right, right.

WN: I see.

JT: On his spare time.

WN: How did you get interested in judo?

JT: Well, you know, we'd stick around there, the judo gym was right next to the girls' locker room. So he'd say, "Come in."

And I tell you it's guts, you know? Here the guy tossing the guys around and I say, "Oh, I'll try." So Doc taught me a lesson, flip me around.

They said "Hey, this is no fun, being thrown. I want to do the throwing." So he got a big kick, you know, small little kids trying to throw an ex-champion. But he liked that. And he taught me lot of tricks. His kid brother was a statewide champion from Hilo. He used to invite me to his house. The strong ones used to be at Honpa Hongwangi. You know, and there used to be, (pause) he was "Sundown," what was his name? He was very good friend of the doctor, and he showed me a few tricks. Those days, Oki Shikina, [Tsutao] "Rubberman" Higami. Rubberman was a junior heavyweight champion. And this judo event was [taught by] a *bon-san* in the Honpa Hongwanji. The early, early judo teachers were all *bon-san*, you know, all [Buddhist] priests. When I was just a kid, that doctor that took me to see this *sensei*. And he showed me a couple of tricks. Not in the gym, but in private. Then---don't record this.

WN: Okay, I'll turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: So how old were you when you first started judo?

JT: About seventeen.

WN: About seventeen.

JT: Yeah. You know Sakata or something? He was in movies and all that.

WN: Oh, yeah, yeah. Tosh Togo. Harold Sakata?

JT: Sakata. He used to train over there in weight lifting at Pālama, you know. He was in training over there and we were in the *tatami* area, where they had to walk past to get to the weight room. We were training judo over there. That's when one of the other guys told me, "Hey, you want to join professional wrestling?"

I said, "Hey, [I'm] 120 pounds."

(Laughter)

JT: But I knew Oki Shikina and Rubberman Higami. Well, the story is, [Paul] Anderson asked me to teach. He said, "You used to use the facilities, how's about teaching?"

So I say, "Why not? I'd be glad to teach."

And I asked Dr. Yoshikawa. He said, "Go ahead, teach them." But again, I didn't [have] *da kine* procedures and all that. So I joined Professor Okazaki [at the] Nikko [Restoration] Sanatorium. And there, Dr. Glover, all those guys, they had charts, all *nage-no-kata*, you know, *shime-no-kata*, and *oku-no-kata* and all that, all written down. And it was developed by a Professor Kanno in Japan in the Kodokan. He was a foremost judo man in Japan. And Professor Okazaki was his *deshi*, or student. So I learned all the procedures of teaching beginners and I became one of the teachers that can teach somebody, teach people who didn't have any knowledge, to fall, judo fall, in less than fifteen minutes. And people used to take one month or so, still cannot learn the judo falls. And I developed a method that they can learn.

WN: What ranking were you at the time?

JT: *Shodan*. One, you know?

WN: Yeah.

JT: Then I developed acute appendicitis. And Dr. Yamamoto, who operated on me, he said, "I can't find your appendix where it belongs, it's way in the back." You know, and since judo, tumbling and all that, see? So I couldn't do much tumbling. Those days, when you get a simple appendicitis, you lay in bed for ten days. Don't move, you know. [Today], the day you operate, they tell you to stand up and move around. Different method.

So Professor Okazaki used to have Nikko [Restoration] Sanatorium. That's where [they did] respiratory massage. So I pick up massage over there. You know, I can't be rough and tumble, so I went over there, and there, I met this guy, Carr, he was a heavyweight [wrestling] champion. Killer Kowalski, Al Karasick, and those guys. Then after the wrestling match—which is a lot of *shibai* but they take a lot of beating—they used to come to Professor Okazaki's place to recuperate. So I used to massage those guys. And as I do that, I became

familiar with them. I asked them lot of questions and they used to help me. The techniques.

And to Killer Kowalski, he's quite famous, I said, "Would you come to my judo class, you know, I have a judo class, and will you tell them something about clean living?" and so forth. They didn't have drugs those days, but you know, stay away from trouble, go to school, because they need somebody to idolize, see. And he was well known.

"Hey, sure." And he came. I didn't pay him anything. He gladly picked up couple of kids, like that. And take pictures, group pictures. I brought him to Pālama. Hey, they didn't know what Pālama was, but he came and very patriotic, you know, we get American flag, we put it in the background.

Lot of kids became doctors, became lawyers. Dr. Kaneshiro, you know at University of Hawai'i? Kenneth Kaneshiro? You talk to him about Pālama. Yeah, he came . . .

WN: One of your students?

JT: Yeah, yeah, him. And Dr. [Clarence] Chang. All Pālama kids, you know.

WN: So you were teaching at Pālama. Were you teaching anywhere else?

JT: Yeah. The athletic director of Pālama was Kiyoshi Matsuo.

WN: Oh, "Knuckles?"

JT: Yeah. He didn't influence me to teach at Pālama, but he knew I was teaching over there. So when he got a job at Pearl Harbor, sub[marine] base, he called me over to teach. They had couple of good, high-ranking Japanese guys, but they couldn't talk English.

WN: Oh, so teaching them?

JT: Yeah. So with my training at Okazaki and whatnot, I taught for about twenty years at Pearl Harbor sub base. And then at the Tripler [Army Medical Center] hospital, about a year and a half. Because word got around, you know. They'd say, "Hey, come over here and teach." And I was at Hickam Air Force [Base] for roughly about six months. But I couldn't take all three, so I stuck to Pearl Harbor.

Then---this is off the record, too.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: You said you wanted me to turn off the tape recorder but I thought the story was interesting, so can you just repeat it.

JT: (Chuckles) Oh, well, with my training of kendo at Pālama Gakuen, and this Ito-sensei, he was *go-dan* or something in kendo, top-ranking. And he taught me a lot. I was the only guy, as I said, without the uniform, but I used to pick anybody, you know, higher than my rank, and made out pretty good. But somehow, they got wind of it [during World War II] and [General Walter C.] Short invited me to teach him kendo. And I said, "Gee, we're not allowed to."



And he said, "Look, you coming into our area, it'll be secluded, nobody knows about it. I'm in charge of this place. You teach me all you can."

"I don't have the equipment. The kendo cane, you know, *shinai*, *men*, *dō*, *ko-te*."

He said, "We have enough of those things all confiscated." He said, "Will you teach us?"

I said, "But you're not supposed to."

He said, "Nobody else would know, but I would know." So he had couple of navy officers, he being the top man. We were banging away, I was teaching them *uchikomu*, bang, bang, bang! And *ko-te* like all that.

WN: Where? On the base?

JT: Yeah, yeah.

WN: You had no trouble getting on the base?

JT: No, no, they made everything very simple.

(Laughter)

JT: So here a guy with a black badge, going over there, teaching them, you know?

WN: You had black badge?

JT: Yeah, all Japanese had black badge. *Hilahila* about the black badge, you know? But I was in there. I had the handbag they gave me. And so we had all the equipment. And they said, "Okay, go ahead, teach us."

WN: Why do you think he wanted to learn kendo?

JT: Because he was good in fencing. And he was a guy who was kind of researching. Japanese have kendo, Japanese is our enemy. Like his kind of fencing, English [i.e., Western] kind, you know, the blade goes like this [i.e., pointed].

WN: Yeah.

JT: Japanese is strictly, "Maaay!" you cut the guy in half, sideways, like that there. So he liked that, he wanted to learn as much as he can. He wanted to know the length of the *katana* and all that. And it was educational for me too, because I said, "You teach me little bit about fencing." And they had masks, you know, [it's] completely different. But the purpose was more or less the same. This fencing, it's not for killing. Kendo is fencing, but for killing, but they have points, you know? The *men*, *do*, *ko-te*, like that. Very similar, you know. And so I learned a little bit of fencing from [General] Short.

WN: So did [General] Short---what about things like the cultural part of kendo, like bowing and so forth? Did you expect him to . . .

JT: Oh yeah, I went through all that. Yeah. All the [kendo] gyms used to have the picture of the emperor, you know? And you bow to each other, then you bow to the emperor. And when you're through, the whole class look at the emperor and bow like that. It's too much allegiance, brainwashing going on, see?

The founder of Kodokan, Professor Kanno, was invited to the American Military Academy five years before the war to teach the military and the law enforcement about judo. And to learn judo you have "kappo." "Kappo" is to "revive." "Sappo" is "to kill," see? So in everything, like the professor said, after the war, he has to teach lot of "kappo." Because during the war, it was all "sappo," to kill. And "kappo" is to heal. So he got the sanitorium where he massage, and he restore a person's health. And that's how---funny the evolution, how these things tie in one another, see? So I spent about five years massaging.

WN: So judo, then, was acceptable during the war?

JT: Yeah, that was the only Japanese . . .

WN: No dojos were closed or anything?

JT: No, no.

WN: And you could continue to teach judo?

JT: Yeah.

WN: I see. So were you still teaching at the military base during the war?

JT: After.

WN: After the war?

JT: Yeah.

WN: But during the war, you were doing kendo?

JT: Yeah, and one led to the other and I became very friendly with a colonel who was injured in the European Theater, but trained in Schofield. And somehow, I was introduced to him. The twenty-fifth anniversary of Pearl Harbor, who was sitting in the front row, [with] this colonel? Me. Oh, that was so funny, you know? I was the only *bobora* sitting down there.

(Laughter)

JT: Commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the sinking of the [USS] *Arizona*, and all that.

WN: Oh boy.

JT: So I told the colonel, "Hey, I'm not the wanted here. During the war, I had black badge. We were feared. Sabotage and all that."

He said, "Never mind that, you with me." He said, "I gave my body and I'm cripple [because I] got shot. You're with me."

And I tell you, it's a funny experience and yet. . . . Japanese call it *dokyō*, you know, guts. If I was sentimental or everything, I won't go. I'd say, "Sorry, Colonel, you go yourself. Get a cane or somebody to take you in." He was badly injured, so I had to hold him. Walk in there, front seat, and all the services going on, I'm the only "Jap" there.

WN: That was in the [19]60s, yeah?

JT: Yeah, that was the kind of position I was in, just by luck, you know. Not because I was any dignitary or political figure, I was there because I knew the colonel who came here especially for the ceremony and wanted me to be by his side.

WN: And you knew him through judo.

JT: Yeah.

WN: I wonder, when you taught Colonel—I mean . . .

JT: [General Walter C.] Short?

WN: [General] Short.

JT: Kendo.

WN: Did they pay you?

JT: No, no, no.

WN: (Laughs) Just wondering.

(Laughter)

JT: Even Pālama Settlement, I taught at . . .

WN: Oh, you didn't get paid at Pālama Settlement?

JT: No.

WN: Oh, is that right?

JT: Pālama Settlement, I put at least about thirty, thirty-five years there. I showed you the plaque I got, yeah?

WN: Yeah. So when did you start and when did you end?

JT: About '43, I think.

WN: You started.

JT: Yeah.

WN: Nineteen seventy-eight you retired?

JT: You mean quit Pālama?

WN: Yeah.

JT: Yeah, about there. Then tied in with Pearl Harbor, see?

WN: Right.

JT: Yeah. And during the war, '42-'44, I was teaching kendo, see? And if this [information] come out, then people [would] say, "What! This was going on?"

(Laughter)

WN: That's interesting though.

JT: You know, I'm considered the enemy. Not because I am, but because of the ancestry, yeah?

WN: Yeah.

JT: And with the black badge, you know, this is unprecedented.

WN: Were there any problems that you encountered?

JT: Not at all. No one called me "the Jap" or anything like that, you know? And I teach them to bow, you know, and respect the opponent, but not to the emperor, see?

WN: I'm wondering too, if when you're teaching judo during war, did you still have them bow to each other?

JT: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

WN: So there was nothing, no changes taking place.

JT: No, no, no. The only change was the respect of the emperor. The Shinto system, you see. So even today, they bow to each other and they bow to the teacher, but not to the emperor.

WN: I see, I see.

JT: So now, I'm telling you about my history, not about Pālama's, so excuse.

WN: No, no, that's okay. At Pālama, when you were teaching judo, were your students all different ethnic groups?

JT: The most rugged kids around there.

WN: Oh yeah?

JT: Yeah. One outstanding kid, he became the territory champion in judo, Clarence Young. And Clarence Young was the most notorious kid around there, in Pālama. The father was working city and county [of Honolulu]. Whenever he gets a call from the police station, "Yes, I know, my son." So he used to go and bail the son out, you know? "What happened?"

"Oh, he was in a fight. Oh, he was a ringleader," and all that.

And the father, they used to live in the vicinity, he came to me. I met the father through election booth, I think. I was a Republican, he was a Democrat inspector. So he said, "I understand you teach judo. Will you teach my son judo?"

I said, "Your son? Ho, he's a troublemaker!"

He said, "I know, I go to the jail all the time and bail him out. Please teach him."

So I said, "Okay, but he got to listen to me, now."

He say, "Okay. I'll make sure he listens to you."

So we developed a strong bond. The kid had all the guts you need. His intelligence was superb but on the wrong side, see? And he wasn't afraid of anybody. Gang leader, he was, and he wasn't a big guy. So I teach him as much as I can, and he learned. He was good. I say, "Okay, we're going in the tournament. I want to teach you this art and you do this now." Bang, bang, bang! He cleaned them all out, you know. And he became champion.

Of course, the war came about, so Clarence was inducted. First, he went to the European Theater. Not a scratch. Then they pull him into the Korean War, and he was captured as a prisoner of war. Then after that ended, the father, you know, who asked me to teach him judo, told me if I would come and meet the son. So here, a bloke from Pālama go in my car, an old junky car, go to Hickam [Air Force Base], police escort, military police on the motorcycle. They lead me, take me to the hanger. Front seat, with the family, the Young family. Oh boy, you know, quite a deal. And sit down there, get the lei, [waiting for] Clarence coming off the ramp. Waited, waited, then Clarence finally came out with a general. And they had a press interview and Clarence's wife was there. And appeared in *Look* magazine. Those days, *Look* magazine was a big thing.

And the comment that the general said was that he wanted to go down the ramp together with Sergeant Clarence Young. He said, "This is a true American." So they both walked down the ramp, you know. And all the military pomp, the band playing, salutes and all that, the press. Came out in [*Look*] magazine. He said, "We were both prisoners of war. He said, "I heard every bit how they tried to intimidate him for the propaganda. But he stuck to the gun, that he was an American."

WN: Wow.

JT: Yeah.

WN: Hell of a story.

JT: And that's all recorded, incidentally.

WN: In *Look* magazine?

JT: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sergeant Clarence Young.

WN: So where is he now? Is he still alive or . . .

JT: Yeah, I think he is. I heard rumors he died, but I checked and he's still alive.

WN: What were the incentives to keep, to have a student, to have someone from Pālama keep going to judo class? I mean, what did you teach?

JT: Oh, well I knew this guy was a gang leader. I knew he was a notorious guy. And because of his father asking me to please teach him. And I told him I won't tolerate this guy going out and doing what he wants, he's got to listen to me.

And I said, "Okay, send him over." I just taught him the straight judo. Straight etiquette and the basic human politeness and the courage that go with dignity, all those things imbedded in me and I just pass it on to him. I knew that if he used this art the wrong way, he's going to hurt people. Because those days, and now too, it's considered a martial art and a weapon. It's just like holding a gun, see? So those things came natural, you know, imbedded in him. "Hey, stay on the right side, stay out from trouble." I liked him, you know? He's the kind of leader, but in the right direction. And he proved that in the war.

WN: Well, you were there [Pālama Settlement] for thirty-five years, do you notice any differences or change, did you notice any changes in the type of student from the early days to later on? Were they harder to teach, easier?

JT: Pālama, in general, is known to be quite a rugged place. And you can produce champions from them if you get them on the right track. Otherwise, these kids, there's no glory in being tossed around. They quit. You know, so you have to baby them, you got to nurse them. Then maybe it sinks like that, spread out. So I was having kids from all over, you know?

WN: But did your teaching methods change over the years? Did you have to baby them more now?

JT: Oh yeah, yeah.

You know, one thing leads to the other. Serendipity. So summers, I had students from all over. And [Lorin] Gill became the [executive director] over there at Pālama Settlement [in 1964]. He asked if I would teach his nephews. Gary Gill and Steve Gill, and their neighbors, they all used to come to Pālama. You know, here's the towheads coming to Pālama in the rugged district and I used to keep them in line.

At Pālama, the Haoles were minority, you know. [At] Punahou [School], Roosevelt [High

School], like that, the Orientals were the minority, but at Pālama, all these blue-eyed guys were minority, you know? Tears, you know, when you throw them like that, or, they get thrown, one hurt and one embarrassment, they'd bite their tongue and then they stuck it out. I said, "Thatta boy," not to baby, but to keep those guys coming back. Wasn't just judo, you know. You have to give them that little bit of moral support, like that.

WN: Are you still active in Pālama today?

JT: Well, I became a director for about ten years, [but] no, I'm not active [now]. See, the irony of it was, Lowell Dillingham pulled me out and made me one of the board of directors of Aloha United Way. And I was chairman of one budget committee that had about eight agencies. And of the agencies, Pālama was in it. The YMCA, YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association], and Pālama Settlement, YMBA [Young Men's Buddhist Association], were all under my [jurisdiction]. And they come and asked for money. And of course I had a committee, but I was the chairman of them, to say, "Okay, we'll give this guy so much." And when Pālama comes, I have to pull back, don't show partiality. But I gave [Robert] Higashino [then Pālama Settlement executive director] enough information on how to attack this thing.

WN: Yeah, you don't want to have a conflict of interest.

JT: To show favoritism to Pālama Settlement. But fortunately, Higashino worked it out, so we gave him money. We gave him a lot of money. And we had lot of controversy, you know, when I was a [trustee] of Pālama. Because the type of vocation, the attitude was different. You see, [for some], it was a stepping-stone. You know, just building their reputation to get [another] job. It wasn't a career thing, they could have stayed there and developed the community and developed the kids of all different ethnic groups and not [become] well-to-do. Whereas our time was different. This is a place that we were reared and trained in and we had to do something to give back to the community. Not to say, "Sayonara," see? So the attitude was different, you know.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 27-46-1-98; SIDE ONE

WN: Continuation of interview with Jerry Tarutani on February 12, 1998, for the Pālama Settlement project. This is side three.

JT: You can see the evolution. One being a member and using the facilities there. And later on, growing up and being chairman of the finance committee. Looking after the agency. And then in the process, you come familiar with all the staff. You know, what they do, what they doing for the settlement. And what kind of attitude they have. Are they there just to build their status in the job? Or are they there to give their all for the kids there? The attitude is different, you know?

WN: When were you director at Pālama Settlement?

JT: Seventy. . . . Gee, I don't know the exact date.



WN: You were still teaching judo?

JT: I was finished already.

WN: Probably late [19]70s.

JT: Yeah.

WN: I see. And then after that, you became part of Aloha United Way.

JT: No, I was in already. See, I was director. . . .

WN: You were there at the same time.

JT: Yeah, yeah, right.

WN: Oh, I see. So when you said there were a lot of problems at that time, it was because of certain individuals.

JT: Yeah, see, I was the only guy backing John Sharp. Because there were rumors that his championship team were taking drugs. And I questioned John Sharp. I said, "John, I'm going to stick 100 percent with you, but you got to come clean with me. You know, this is the kind of rumor going on and if you are pushing drugs—stop it. And if you're not, stand up and fly straight and don't be afraid, see? And I'll be 100 percent back of you." Well, it turned out to be that he was clean. He was producing championship teams, you know? So I don't know how the ranking is now, but he was respected in that score. Some people were out to get him.

WN: So that incident sort of blew over, I mean, it didn't go further than that?

JT: Yeah. But it was rumored around, see. "Aah, they get champions because, you know, they take drugs," like that, see?

WN: Well, I know he told me the story of one of the kids who was sniffing paint.

JT: It could be.

WN: Yeah, I remember that.

JT: John, if he sensed it, he cracked down on it. He didn't encourage it or let it slip by. Because he knew that the kids were good. And the University [of Hawai'i] was sending their football team, you know, sacrifice maybe a couple of Sundays, give them little pointers. College and Pālama. It's a great difference, but they would look up to the university players. They used to come. And that helped John Sharp too, you see? And John had some professional experience, so at least some basics, he can teach the kids. So they were champions for couple of years, you know?

WN: Anything else you want to say about Pālama?

JT: Pālama was my second home. And I would say that the facilities they have there is one of the

best. And getting the right instructors, with their heart in their profession, you know, as a career, it could go a long way. They're in a perfect spot to attract Mayor Wright [Homes], you know, all that gang thing going on and all that, to bring those guys in. And doing the things that Bobby Rath's father meant Pālama to be, a settlement house. Not to give employment, but at least give them a place to come to learn any arts or crafts or things like that. And building their morale and dignity.

Look at all the people, some of the leaders, that came from Pālama. Governor [George R.] Ariyoshi was there for a while. And Bobby [Robert H.] Rath. He was a minority, you know, a boy from Punahou. So, he learned a lesson too, and yet he was broad-minded enough and little bit of his father [James A. Rath, first Pālama Settlement director], you know, compassion, for the poor and needy guys to work closely together, see?

WN: You said that you think that they've gotten away a little bit from the original intent.

JT: Yeah, very much.

WN: In what ways?

JT: I would say in a way of not reaching out, you know? To attract the very guys that need a settlement house.

WN: So in other words, you know, during the years, they started to get people from the outside, not necessarily the needy ones?

JT: Well, it became more or less an institution where [it was] more businesslike. Instead of, "Hey guys, here we have these facilities, come. If you want to learn computer, we'll get experts to teach you. But there'll be a little fee to it, you know, it's only appropriate. And we'll try to get the best talent for you. And you have the same qualification or rights to excel," and build that kind of feeling. What Pālama Settlement was—I think Bobby Rath can tell you—it [was] a settlement house for all walks of life to come over there not only for recreation, but to learn different arts and crafts there.

WN: Do you think economics has something to do with it?

JT: The guys that need it the most right now, in that community, is the Mayor Wright housing. And then the housing around Farrington [i.e., Ka'ahumanu Homes]. And it's sort of a clash with the Nu'uaniu YMCA, YMBA. They are the more affluent membership there. But they could draw from Papakōlea, all over, you know? They can come over there and feel equal and then with a little determination and a little coaching, these people could up their standards. And they can challenge the best of them. They don't have to take a back seat.

WN: So do you think Pālama Settlement now, needs to rethink their purpose?

JT: Yeah, their purpose. They have a gold mine over there. They sit right in the community that badly needs it. How many comes from Mayor Wright housing? How many comes from the, you know, poor people? Not many.

WN: Really?

JT: Yeah.

WN: So they come from the outside districts.

JT: Within there, but the affluent guys. And in the board of directors they have top talents in there, in the board of directors. They don't reach down to the level of the community there, see?

WN: So you said very few Mayor Wright housing kids are actually active at Pālama?

JT: Yeah.

WN: Kūhiō Park Terrace too? I would imagine not many.

JT: Not many. But my judo class had them from all over the place.

WN: So the kids that go to Pālama now, most of them still live in Pālama, but not in those areas?

JT: Yeah. And you know, if you do good to one kid—you don't have to get the whole Mayor Wright housing now, I'm picking out Mayor Wright housing now, because it's so close. The word gets around. Then one kid will spread to a dozen kids that they'll come, you know. Like Clarence Young. He was a ringleader. When he came, ho, the flock of guys came. "Hey, if Clarence can go, I can go too," that kind of attitude. But it became a sort of a business venture instead of a eleemosynary, you know, to help and promote a closer relationship with the members. I don't think they charge membership anymore. See, before, if you break rules, simple rules, you get suspended. You cannot come to Pālama, see? They don't have such a thing now. And when they'd have such discipline, a person would think twice to do wrong. You know, and they'd try to go straight.

(Laughs) You heard enough. Come on, have something to drink.

WN: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

# **Reflections of Pālama Settlement**

**Volume I**

**Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

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